

The Thirties

of unemployment, or some other misfortune, might make their continuance impossible; and then all was lost—bliss, furniture, and expectations of an advance to a fuller civilisation. The severity of this process was mitigated a little by a Private Member's Bill, promoted by Miss Ellen Wilkinson, which made it obligatory for defaulting instalment-buyers to be partially reimbursed for payments already made before what they had been in process of paying for could be seized.

La the restless determination to extract ever more material satisfaction from life to compensate for other satisfactions which were lacking, ever heavier drafts were drawn on the future. Expense of shame in a waste of passion; gather ye rosebuds while ye may—even in winter, before any harm bloomed.

Advance to a fuller civilisation was made on the easy-payment system, with soon the haunting fear of default, when all that had been acquired—votes, education, peace, many amenities, delivered, as guaranteed, in a plain van—would suddenly be taken, without even the reimbursement provided for in Miss Wilkinson's Bill.

Perhaps more conducive even than instalment-buying to a fuller civilisation was publicity, whose ramifications were constantly being extended. Large numbers of copy-writers were engaged in devising new slogans likely to increase the sale of particular commodities; artists devoted their talents to the same purpose, and it was possible to earn a guinea or so just for lending an anonymous radiant countenance to a display advertisement. Celebrities were able to augment their incomes by publicly

acknowledging their taste in face-cream or in
cigarettes; science,
learning and art, all were utilised in the great task
of persuading
the public to eat more, drink more, smoke more,
wear more,
consume more. Bread, whose popularity might
have been
thought assured, was worth a campaign; milk had
its advocates,
and six athletic girls performed gymnastic feats at
seaside resorts
in the expectation of thereby stimulating the
consumption of
potatoes. How misfortunes like constipation or
body-odour
might be overcome, was delicately explained;
and pictorial